

Our mother's or that
Of a never to be forgotten lover.

When you turn over and wake
We listen together.
When you drift back to sleep
I lie watching you.
I listen to your breathing
And the rain-talk tells me
That our time together
Will always be happy.

AT THE END

Let no mortician be her
last lover I have sent

to Benares for two cords
of the finest sandalwood.

DAWN (from *Byways*)

after Daphne and Apollo (Ovid)

And speaking of those
With whose destruction
The gods amused themselves
Notable was Dawn of Santo, Texas,
The most perfect face and body
That ever I beheld,
Each part perfection,
Modeled on the Venus of Milo
And perhaps, who knows for no one
Ever saw her, the Kyprian herself,
She violet-eyed, born of the seafoam.
Her father began tampering with her

When she was ten; she was placed
In a home where there were
Brutish boys and little education.
Escaping at fifteen she reached Tulsa,
Got a job in a topless bar,
Met men, too many men
Who could see only the body,
Not the person inside it.
At last came one who was decent,
A man from New York
Who treated her kindly,
Showed her respect, a good man.
He took her to New York,
Set her up in an apartment,
Sent her to highschool,
Got books for her to read,
Bolstered her confidence,
Taught her how to dress.
But the cruel gods, bent on her
Destruction, caused him to die.
Back to the start, to despair,
Again the slave of her body.
When I met Dawn she was
Damaged goods. She cursed me
As I talked kindly to her,
Saying I was like the rest.
But I persisted. If it wasn't
Love it was an obsession.
In the end I know I gave her
Some happiness, some release
From her bondage, when we were
In Italy and Spain together.
One night in Milan when we
Were walking back to the hotel
From a restaurant she began
To cry in the street, at first
Softly and then violently.

She told me I had changed her.
That night she was indeed
A changed person, tender and
Passionate. We were happy
In Rome and Barcelona.
But I had not reckoned
On the spite of the gods.
They were jealous that I'd claimed
One they thought was their own.
In Burgos, cruel Burgos,
She suddenly became hostile
And silent, then catatonic.
I put her in the hospital
But their drugs didn't help her.
She escaped from the hospital
And threw herself under a tram.
I buried her in the cemetery
Of the Campo Sagrado, a long
Way from Santo, Texas. When I
Went through her suitcase
I found she had been writing
Little poems. Strange poems
That made no sense but they had,
In some of the phrases,
A kind of surrealistic beauty.